



February 22, 2001

The Honorable Greg Ganske
1108 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Ganske:

On behalf of the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG), representing 41,000 physicians dedicated to improving women's health care, I am pleased to offer our support for the Bipartisan Patient Protection Act of 2001 – S 283/HR 526. We want to thank you for your continued commitment to ensuring women in managed care plans direct access to their ob-gyn providers.

Women need the assurance that they can receive care for their women's health needs from their ob-gyns without the added time, expense, and inconvenience of first having to get permission from their primary care physicians. Your legislation would ensure this fundamental patient protection to all women in managed care plans.

Today, many managed care plans require women – even pregnant women – to get permission slips from their primary care physicians before they can see their ob-gyns. Sixty percent of ob-gyns in managed care plans report that their gynecologic patients are either limited or barred from seeing their ob-gyns without first getting permission from another physician. An astounding 28% report that their pregnant patients must first receive another physician's permission before seeing their ob-gyns. To make matters worse, nearly 75% of ob-gyns report that their patients have to return to their primary care physicians for permission before their ob-gyn can provide necessary follow-up care.

Direct access to ob-gyns for all covered obstetric and gynecological follow-up care, as under your plan, will help to ensure quality health for women, including pregnant women and their infants. We thank Senators McCain and Kennedy and Representatives Ganske and Dingell for their leadership and commitment to these vital goals, and we look forward to working closely with you as this legislation moves toward enactment.

Sincerely,

Ralph W. Hale, MD, FACOG
Executive Vice President